



ANARCHISM AND ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

"Anarchism recognises only the relative significance of ideas, institutions, and social conditions. It is, therefore not a fixed, self enclosed social system, but rather a definite trend in the historical development of mankind, which, in contrast with the intellectual guardianship of all clerical and governmental institutions, strives for the free unhindered unfolding of all the individual and social forces in life. Even freedom is only a relative, not an absolute concept, since it tends constantly to broaden its scope and to affect wider circles in manifold ways. *For the Anarchist, freedom is not an abstract philosophical concept, but the vital concrete possibility for every human being to bring to full development all capacities and talents with which nature has endowed him, and turn them to social account.* The less this natural development of man is interfered with by ecclesiastical or political guardianship, the more efficient and harmonious will human personality become, the more will it become the measure of the intellectual culture of the society in which it has grown."

~ by Rudolf Rocker

ANARCHAFEMINISM

"Her development, her freedom, her independence, must come from and through herself. First, by asserting herself as a personality, and not as a sex commodity. Second, by refusing the right of anyone over her body; by refusing to bear children, unless she wants them, by refusing to be a servant to God, the State, society, the husband, the family, etc., by making her life simpler, but deeper and richer. That is, by trying to learn the meaning and substance of life in all its complexities; by freeing herself from the fear of public opinion and public condemnation."

~ Emma Goldman, Anarchism and Other Essays



ASSOCIATION OF NORTHWEST ANARCHISTS

ANWA exists to facilitate organization and action based on the anarchist ideals of freedom, equality, and cooperation. We conduct educational projects, host speakers, publish a monthly newsletter and more. For more information, or to get involved, contact ANWA at:

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THINK FOR YOURSELF

PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENT THOUGHT

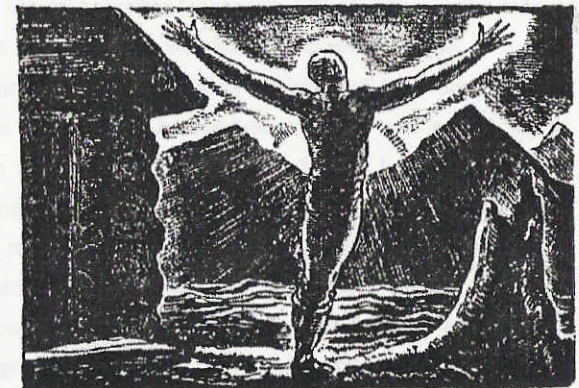


What is education about, anyway? It's about learning things, gaining knowledge, broadening your experience, and so forth. It's not the same as job training or indoctrination, and while policyheads will never use those words, that's what they are effectively devising with their education policy. For a society like America to function, you need a managerial (ruling) class and a employee (working) class. And that's just for the peons—the really rich just glide on by, nearly invisible and seemingly untouchable. Their wealth allows them to gain a true education, more often than not.

But for the vast majority of you, "education" amounts to narrowing your options, closing your mind, getting you to accept the status quo as the "best of all possible worlds" and to know your place in it. The parts of education that aren't outright indoctrination are compartmentalized and specialized, so you learn to think in narrow terms, and not broadly -- small picture versus big picture. You're trained to do a job, or at least be able to get a job and work reasonably well. You're taught not to run with scissors.

Educators call this "life adjustment" education, which basically holds that you're too dumb to waste a liberal education on, so what the schools need to teach are things that will let you get on in life as a productive, obedient citizen.

This fits in the scheme of things, too -- we're educated to lead lives of political spectators, able to contribute to the wealth of our bosses but not really to have



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much in the way of control over our lives. To fill that gaping hole in our lives is a paycheck that lets us go out and seek transitory gratification in our consumer "culture." That's the "ideal."

Of course, this may seem unduly cynical; but I'm a cynic, so what can you expect? Do you know who the original Cynics were? Check it out on your own.

Education doesn't have to be indoctrination -- you can work against that, and the way to do it is to learn how to think creatively and critically. That is what education should truly seek to do; it should get you looking around you and deciding for yourself what is good and bad.

This kind of education is utterly lacking in our current system, and its omission makes sense -- those in charge don't want freethinkers around. Better to have educated fools than troublesome freethinkers. And freethinkers are always troublesome.

I am most certainly NOT against education -- I am against indoctrination. The important thing is to know the difference between the two, and that means having a discerning, inquisitive, critical, skeptical mind. This is not encouraged, for the reasons I indicated above.

So, you'll have to develop it on your own. King Mob's piece on "Zen anarchism" got me thinking about the drive for personal development as a way of fighting this convenience-addicted, consumerist culture. While I think KM's plan is good, I think it is too easy to turn inward in a narcissistic game of self-improvement and not apply that self-improvement to the world around you. Maybe I'm off-base about that; it's just my opinion, anyway.

To me, enlightened individuals need to work with each other to bring about desired social change -- it doesn't mean becoming full-time activists, but it does mean (re)creating a civil society, something that has been all-but-obliterated the past 30 years in this country. Yes, the personal is political, but the result of this ethos is that the political sphere (at least that of the Left) has evaporated.

What we need is a new dialogue among freethinking people who value ideas like freedom, liberty, democracy, and anarchism. And to be able to engage in that kind of dialogue, we need to be able to think logically and creatively, and to be articulate and persuasive.

READING LIST

The following reading list is partially derived from that book, which is an okay book that happens to explore the ideas I'm referring to above -- the emphasis isn't so much on developing critical thinking as in a general humanities curriculum helping get the poor out of poverty. But I think the idea could be put to work building large numbers of critical thinking people, a necessary component of any healthy society, and something we lack today. So, in roughly historical order, is the reading list to get you started on the path of free-thinking:

Lao Tzu, The Tao te Ching

Confucius, The Analects

Sappho, Lyrics

Sophocles, Oedipus and Antigone

Euripides, Medea

Plato, Apology, Republic, Protagoras, Meno, Gorgias

Aristotle, Ethics, Politics, Poetics, The Art of Rhetoric

Plutarch, Lives: Marcus Cato

Virgil, Aeneid, Ovid, Metamorphoses

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

St. Augustine, The City of God, Confessions

Maimonides, Guide to the Perplexed

Avicenna, Psychology

Dante, Comedy

Chaucer, Canterbury Tales

Machiavelli, The Prince

Montaigne, Essays

John Locke, Civil Government and An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

Jean Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract

Musashi, The Book of Five Rings

Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations

Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America

Voltaire, Candide

The complete version of this article and the reading list can be found on www.infoshop.org.